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OREGON COUNTRY FAIR, 1973 Photo courtesy OCF Archives

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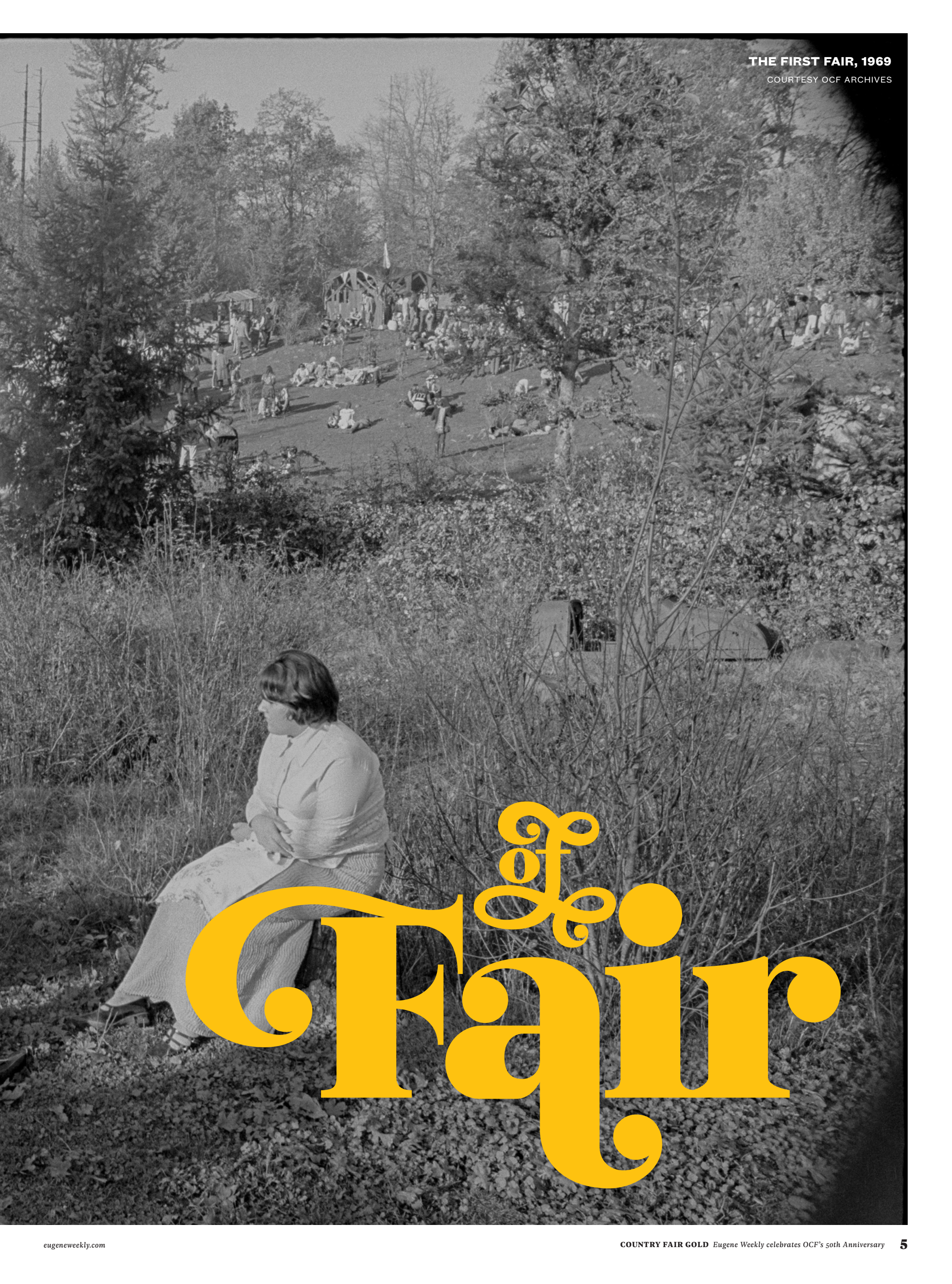
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A black and white photograph of a forest scene. In the center, there is a small wooden cabin with a thatched roof. Two people are in the foreground: one is sitting on the ground with their back to the camera, and the other is standing next to them, wearing a long white dress and a lace headscarf. The background is filled with dense trees and foliage.

50 years



THE FIRST FAIR, 1969
COURTESY OCF ARCHIVES

Of Fair

OREGON COUNTRY FAIR SPROUTED FROM A TINY SCHOOL FUNDRAISER

BY **SUZI PROZANSKI** FOR *EUGENE WEEKLY*

The raucous three-day arts and cultural extravaganza known today as the Oregon Country Fair began 50 years ago as a small crafts fair organized by parents and teachers to raise funds for an alternative school called Children's House. Fittingly, Children's House emphasized a child's right to play.

Over the next five decades, the Oregon Country Fair would offer kids of all ages a place to frolic every year in its forests and meadows near Veneta, 15 miles west of Eugene. The Fair would expand exponentially from a few dozen volunteers making decisions by consensus in the 1970s, to an established nonprofit organization in 2019 with a 12-member board of directors, half a dozen full-time employees and thousands of volunteers serving on dozens of crews.

Born amid the turbulence and strife of the 1960s culture wars, each Fair created a weekend oasis of feisty fun, Earth awareness, group cooperation and individual respect. Today more than 45,000 Fairgoers annually flock to the Oregon Country Fair from the all over the world to immerse themselves in costumed revelry, unlimited music, delightful vaudeville entertainment and scrumptious food. Through it all, the Fair has remained true to its countercultural roots.

It all began on Nov. 1, 1969, at a rustic Renaissance Faire held in a teacher's wooded pasture on Hawkins Lane in Eugene. Parents hammered together rudimentary booths out of recycled wood. Crafters set up tables and laid out blankets to display their candles, clothing, leatherwork and pottery. Minstrels sang while cooks served soups, barbecued chicken and homemade bread. The event made a modest amount of money for the school, but it sparked a feeling of community that would reverberate for decades.

Several dozen volunteers pulled together a second Fair in May 1970 on vacant property on Crow Road, with profits going to Family Counseling Services of Lane County. White Bird Sociomedical Aid Station, established only a few months earlier, set up a booth at the second Fair to offer counseling and first aid. Chuck and Sue Kesey sold their first-ever batch of frozen yogurt from the Springfield Creamery booth.

The Fair attracted many footloose young people who had grown disenchanted with mainstream society and sought to live more simply. In the 1970s, communes and collectives were popping up around the region like dandelions in springtime. Some folks went "back to the land" to farm. Crafters drove to the Fair in the house-buses and house-trucks that they lived in.

The third Fair, in October 1970, was the first to be held on the current site along the Long Tom River near Veneta and Elmira. Bill and Cynthia Wooten, proprietors of the Odyssey Coffeehouse in downtown Eugene in the late 1960s and early 1970s, rented the land for the event. The Odyssey was a popular gathering spot, and the Wootens would emerge as key Fair coordinators. For



a decade, they would loosely lead a cadre of dedicated volunteers who brought the Fair to life with coordinator-led crews. The Fair coordinators made group decisions by consensus.

"We proceeded on the theory that community originates in communication and is established by cooperation," the late Bill Wooten wrote about the early fairs. "We explored and demonstrated the possibility that a community can cooperatively manage its own experience without being dependent on handouts from bureaucrats and professionals."

In 1975, in response to the threat of a lawsuit by the California Renaissance Faire group, coordinators changed the name of the Oregon event to the Oregon Country Fair, and they adopted a peach logo. The 1975

Nov. 1 & 2, 1969 — First Faire: Two-day Renaissance Pleasure Faire held in a pasture at a teacher's farm on Hawkins Road to benefit a school called Children's House. About 2,000 attended. \$1 donation.

May 29-31, 1970 — Crow Road Faire: The second Oregon Renaissance Fair on Crow Road raised funds for Family Counseling Service of Lane County.

Oct. 16-18, 1970 — First Long Tom Faire: The third Renaissance Fair was the first held at the current location. Cynthia and Bill Wooten co-coordinate the event with friends. About 20,000 attended; \$1 donation.

June 11-13, 1971 — Fair featured 50 food booths, lots of crafts, a beer garden, homebrew tasting and a commune info center. It "started in the hot sunshine and ended in a mire of mud," the *Augur* reported. Cars and buses got stuck in the parking lot for days. 50-cent admission (instead of \$1 donation) Estimated 10,000-15,000 attended.

August 1971 — Lane County commissioners passed assemblies ordinance, restricting organized gatherings of more than 1,500 for more than four hours in unincorporated, unimproved areas.

Oct. 8-10, 1971 — First camping passes created to comply with the new county assemblies ordinance. More than 200 vendors; stages featured acoustic music. Speakers include U.S. Sen. Wayne Morse and famed author Ken Kesey. Off-duty police hired to help with traffic. Security Crew established. Water barrels added. Dogs banned. Admission increased to 75 cents.

TIMELINE BY **SUZI PROZANSKI** • COMPILED FROM OCF DOCUMENTS, NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND YEARS OF RESEARCH



REVEREND CHUMLEIGH

COURTESY OCF ARCHIVES

event had a transition name — the Oregon Country Renaissance Faire.

Also in 1975, Reverend Chumleigh (aka the Flaming Zucchini, aka Michael Mielnik) brought the first vaudeville stage show to the Fair and enlisted six students from Evergreen State College to play in a makeshift marching band. The “Chumleighland Stage” (officially dubbed the Circus Stage on the Fair map) would invite dozens of wildly talented entertainers — including the original Flying Karamazov Brothers — who would bring laughter and delight to Fair audiences for decades.

“Most of the booth people and others just loved having the marching band come through,” says Thaddeus Spae, who in 1975 composed “The Chumleighland March” for the band and played trombone, among other instruments. “We were doing this big celebratory ambient fest, you know, marching all the way around the Fair, whooping and whooping. This was really fun and really new.”

The marching band that paraded around the Fair’s figure-eight-shaped paths would grow over the years from six people to three dozen musicians. They called themselves the Fighting Instruments of Karma Marching Chamber Band/Orchestra. The band and the vaudeville acts added a higher, lighter vibration to the Fair’s mix of music and crafts.

In keeping with their ideals, organizers in 1977 opened the Appropriate Technology Area to showcase alternative energy and homesteading skills like beekeeping and organic farming.

In 1978, participants came to consensus to rename the area “Community Village.” Around the Appropriate Technology Area, they built a semicircle of booths to host groups promoting cooperative living and the causes of peace and justice.

By 1981, Appropriate Technology had outgrown its space in the village, and Fair coordinators opened Energy Park to demonstrate solar power and other alternative energy options. Community Village would continue to spotlight cooperative values, nonprofit enterprises and community networking.

Although Fair organizers gave away money to nonprofits after every Fair, they didn’t formally file for nonprofit status until 1977, when attorney Jill Heiman got the Fair recognized by the state of Oregon as a nonprofit. In 1980, Heiman helped the Fair jump through the hoops to become a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) federal nonprofit.

“When the Fair had to assume a legal identity, Jill was able to gently nudge that through doing a lot of that work herself,” says Ron Chase, who was Fair treasurer in the early 1980s. “She was the primary instrumental person in getting the 501(c)(3), which was crucial to the Fair’s future. Nobody else even recognized the importance of it, much less how hard it was to get.”

Growing Pains

With all the fun and hoopla, Fair organizers often failed to heed the impact the three-day event had on the neighboring communities. The constant traffic made it

June 30, July 1-3, 1972 — Only four-day Fair: Members of the Hoedads tree-planting cooperative stepped up to handle Security Crew. After many Fairgoers shed their clothes in a heat wave, coordinators agree to a “purple sock” rule as being minimum requirement for men.

August 28, 1972 — Grateful Dead Field Trip held in the parking lots of Fair site as a benefit for Springfield Creamery. Chuck and Sue Kesey rented the property from the same group the Fair rented from, Western Aerial Contractors.

June 22-24, 1973 — Oregon Renaissance Faire features craft demonstrations, multiple stages. \$1 admission. Hoax bomb threat on Saturday afternoon caused sheriff to shut off incoming traffic. Bill Wooten said Fair folks had “a calm and easy reaction” to the threat.

Sept. 13-15, 1974 — Ken Kesey spoke from Main Stage, asking for “a great roar of love that can be heard around the state.” First Fair for Dr. Atomic’s Medicine Show and also for “Major Chumleigh.” 265 craft booths.

June 27-29, 1975 — Oregon Country Renaissance Faire in transition to a new name. Peach woodcut logo used in ads. Reverend Chumleigh and a cohort of vaudeville entertainers create “Chumleighland” stage (where W.C. Fields is now). First time for the marching band parade. \$1.75 admission.

June 25-27, 1976 — First year as Oregon Country Fair. Alternative Technology Area added, featuring “composting toilets, food dehydrators, a solar wax melter, see-through beehives, a bicycle-powered flour mill and a methane digester.” \$1.75 admission, bus riders get 50-cent ticket discount.



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COURTESY OCF ARCHIVES

almost impossible for neighbors to run simple errands. People would trespass and tear down neighbors' fences trying to sneak in to the Fair. Fairgoers with no place to stay overnight would sleep in neighbors' pastures or park illegally on the roadsides, leaving behind trash. Neighbors also complained about nudity and drug use.

Lane County commissioners would get an earful of complaints. In 1971, the commissioners passed an outdoor assemblies ordinance that set in place

requirements for gatherings of more than 1,500. At first, the ordinance focused on basics like the number of toilets per person. But each year the commissioners piled on more conditions, ratcheting up the demands.

In 1979, the commissioners added a \$30,000 security bond on top of the requirement to purchase event insurance. At the county hearing, Heiman strongly objected to the bond, noting that it only applied to the Fair and unlawfully limited freedom of assembly. The

commissioners waived the bond in 1979, but turned around and increased by 50 percent the Fair's cost for extra sheriff patrols.

In 1980, the commissioners imposed a \$10,000 bond requirement on the Fair, dismissing concerns expressed by the county attorney. Heiman quickly filed a lawsuit and sought an injunction on behalf of the Fair. The day before the injunction hearing and three days before the Fair was set to begin, county commissioners hastily gathered at the county attorney's office and agreed to waive the bond for the 1980 Fair.

The lawsuit would wind its way through the courts for the next two years. The county eventually lost and agreed to settle. In February 1982, the county sent the Oregon Country Fair a check for \$19,000. It couldn't have come at a more auspicious time. Ironically, the county's efforts to shut the Fair down would result instead in the Fair setting down roots for its future.

At the end of 1980, the property along the Long Tom River had been put on the market. By then the land was down to 240 of the original 400 acres that the Fair first leased in October 1970. The remaining low-lying woods and wetland prairies were subject to seasonal flooding from the Long Tom River that meandered through the site. The owners priced the acreage at \$325,000, and asked for a down payment of \$100,000, a high hurdle. Only \$24,000 sat in the Fair's bank account after the 1981 event. Organizers had raised another \$25,500 with a charter membership fund drive, plus T-shirt and bake sales.

With the county settlement in hand, Fair treasurer Chase and attorney Heiman negotiated terms to pay half the down payment before the 1982 Fair and half afterward. On July 8, 1982, the day before the Fair began, Chase made the first \$50,000 down payment.

Six weeks after the euphoric 1982 Fair, organizers rented the Fair's parking lot fields to the Springfield Creamery for a Grateful Dead concert — the Second

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FAIRGOERS IN THE
LATE '60S/EARLY '70S



June 24-26, 1977 — Community Village established (originally called Appropriate Technology Area) to showcase working cooperatively and living lightly on the land. Six stages: two for theater, dance, storytelling and puppet shows; two for jugglers, acrobats, fire eaters and sword swallows; two for music (Shady Grove and the “Great Meadow” stage). Dusty paths were covered with sawdust and watered down. \$2.50 admission. Bus riders got 50 cents off ticket price. Estimated 18,000 revelers.

May 31, 1977 — Fair attorney Jill Heiman filed papers to get the Oregon Country Fair recognized as an Oregon nonprofit corporation.

July 7-9, 1978 — Five stages listed: Circus, Festival Stage, Daredevil Meadow, Shady Grove and Great Meadow Main Stage. \$3 admission, bus riders got 75 cents off ticket price. Estimated 22,000 attended.

June 29, 30, July 1, 1979 — Three stages: Festival Stage with Reverend Chumleigh, Flying Karamazov Brothers, Magical Mystical Michael; Great Meadow Stage with a variety of music and dance; Shady Grove Stage with different music every 40 minutes. Admission \$3.50, bus riders got \$1.25 discount on ticket.

April 1980 — Oregon Country Fair formally recognized as a federal 501(c)(3) nonprofit, making it tax-exempt.

July 11-13, 1980 — Lane County commissioners imposed a \$10,000 security bond on the Fair, but waived it at the last minute after Fair attorney Jill Heiman filed an injunction against the bond and a lawsuit seeking damages. The Fair goes on.

July 10-12, 1981 — Energy Park debuted as Oregon Energy Horizons, featuring renewable energy exhibits in Kesey Park. Six stages: Admission \$4, free bus rides.

February 12, 1982 — Oregon Country Fair got a check for \$19,000 from Lane County to settle the lawsuit filed by Jill Heiman in 1980.

July 8, 1982 — Fair Treasurer Ron Chase signed the Fair’s promissory note to buy 240 acres of land along the Long Tom River for \$250,000 and made the first \$50,000 down payment. The note called for a second down payment of \$50,000 by December 31, 1982, and for 10 annual payments of \$26,370 due each September 1.

July 9-11, 1982 — The euphoric celebration of buying the land includes the Fighting Instruments of Karma Marching Chamber Band/Orchestra marching the Eight path in a mostly-naked parade.

August 28, 1982 — Springfield Creamery rents the Fair’s parking lot fields to put on the second Decadenal Grateful Dead Field Trip concert. The rental fee helped make the second down-payment on the land in December 1982.



Decadental Field Trip. The rental fee helped meet the second down payment in December 1982.

A few months after signing the purchase agreement, Fair organizers learned that the state highway department planned to reroute Highway 126 through the Fair's parking lot, chopping off the south edge of the property. Numerous hearings resulted in several archaeological digs, where it was proven that the Fair property indeed contained archaeological sites just as significant as the ones the highway department had been trying to avoid.

Artifacts in a 1986 study in the highway right-of-way indicated that the Kalapuya peoples had settled in the valley for thousands of years. The oldest site dated to 11,000 years ago; the first rock ovens dated to 8,000 years ago.

The highway compromise resulted in Highway 126 being rerouted along the Fair's southernmost border, cutting off only a small corner of the property. The Fair got a new south-side entrance in the deal, which considerably reduced the traffic jams that had caused the neighbors so much grief.

A Multi-Generational Fair

Despite the hassles, coordinators maintained their sense of festivity. At a meeting in the 1980s, coordinators defined the purpose of the Fair as "psychospiritual rejuvenation." Each Fair still served up a three-day smorgasbord of magical whimsy and musical fun for thousands of Fairgoers. More and more people came to the Country Fair each year to sample the entertainment at a dozen stages, enjoy a cornucopia of cuisines, and shop the exquisite, handmade crafts in the booths lining the Fair's pathways.

The Fair "is not just an alternative to the dominant culture," notes Leslie Scott, who was hired as general manager in 1992. "It's an absolute reflection of the dominant culture, but it shows how you can live happily

and successfully and beautifully very differently inside the dominant culture and have an influence. It shows you how you change culture and how you create culture."

In 1993 Scott worked with the city of Veneta and Fair volunteers to open Zumwalt Park at the Fern Ridge Reservoir to public camping during the Fair. The park offered Fairgoers a welcome place to stay, but wasn't big enough to handle the demand. In 1996, Fair organizers helped gain county approval for neighbors in Veneta and Elmira to set up temporary campgrounds

in their pastures and fields during each Fair. The neighborhood campgrounds quickly became integral to the Fair experience for hundreds of Fairgoers. By 2018, the campgrounds generated so much traffic that Lane County this year stepped in to work out solutions.

Through the years, the Fair purchased several adjacent properties to the original land. To provide relief from the crowds jamming the original figure-eight-shaped pathway, Fair organizers extended the footprint of the event. In 1991, a new loop called the Left Bank was opened near the



July 8-10, 1983 — Mud Fair. Volunteers pitch in for huge effort to scrape mud off the paths and spread straw Friday morning. Zak Schwartz of White Bird started offering pre-Fair sessions of Crisis Intervention training — later renamed Human Intervention (HI) training — for all Fair crews.

1986 — Archaeological digs relating to the rerouting of Highway 126 document that the Kalapuya peoples gathered in the Fern Ridge area near Fair property 11,000 years ago, and continued to gather seasonally for thousands of years.

July 11-13, 1986 — Peachi the Dragon, originally co-created by the Radar Angels, paraded around the paths of the Eight for the first time.

April 3, 1989 — Fair hired first paid general manager, Arna Shaw.

July 7-9, 1989 — Fair celebrated 20th anniversary with carrot cake and talks by Bill Wooten and Cindy Wooten. New water pipes supplied water fountains that replaced most of the old water barrels. Rerouted Highway 126 created a new entrance to the Fair's parking lots, resulting in fewer traffic jams in the area.

July 13-15, 1990 — KLCC started live broadcasts from Main Stage. The original mortgage for the property along the Long Tom River was paid off.

July 12-14, 1991 — Left Bank established to provide room to move booths crowded out by river erosion along the original Eight path. Jill's Crossing and DeSpain Bridge opened.

April 1, 1992 — Fair hired Leslie Scott as general manager.

May 1992 — Volunteers published the first monthly newsletter to members, provisionally named *Fair Family Flashes* and soon renamed *Fair Family News*.

November 1992 — Oregon Country Fair Endowment established, later renamed the Bill Wooten Endowment Fund.

July 9-11, 1993 — Stage Left opened on the Left Bank. City of Veneta and the Fair co-sponsor public camping at Zumwalt Campground on Fern Ridge Reservoir. The Fair establishes the Neighborhood Response Team.

1995 — First watershed enhancement feasibility grant.

July 12-14, 1996 — Advance, off-site ticket sales began. Jill Heiman Vision Fund established. Record Fair attendance of 53,000.

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Oregon Country Fair

JULY 12

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CONSENSUAL CROISSANT MUSICAL PARODY ON SEX ★ 50 YEARS TRANSFORMING CULTURE: JAY HOGAN ★ REALITY KITCHEN: AN INTEGRATED COMMUNITY
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OBO MARTIN AND FOLK ROCK STORYTELLER ★ OCF: HOW WE GOT FROM THERE TO HERE ★ 50 YEARS OF FAIR STORIES ★ HISTORY
OUR CHILDREN'S TRUST ★ PATCH ADAMS ★ GYPSY MOON WITH PRAVO AND FRIENDS ★ PSYLOCYBIN SERVICE INITIATIVE OF OREGON ★ S
SHAWNA BLUESTAR AND STEVEN T. NEWCOMB ★ SWAMI BEYONDANANDA ★ THE FLYING KARAMAZOV BROTHERS ★ SWAMI AND TRUDI TR

IN THE WORKIT SHOP: KAROLINA LUX ★ HOOP WITH KENDALL ★ SACRED BELLYDANCE WITH SEDONA SOULFIRE
URBAN DANCE CULTURE WITH AMAYA ALVARADO AND MICHAEL GALEN ★ MODERN DANCE WITH ROSEENA ROBINSON
FLAMENCO DANCE WITH SOPHIA SOLANO ★ FOUNDATION AND FLOW YOGA WITH OLIVIA SCHROEDER
BOLLYWOOD-BHANGRA WORKSHOP WITH DJ PRASHANT ★ HIP HOP DANCE EXPLORATION WITH DONNA MATION
WEST AFRICAN DANCE WITH MANIMOU CAMARA AND FODE SYLLA

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AMBIANCE ON THE PATH: THE FIRE SHOW ★ MYSTICS OF NIBIRU ★ REVELERS AERIAL WORKS ★ RISK OF CHANGE ★ CALLIOPE CIRCUSY ★ RAZZLE
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OUTH STAGE: MOES FAMILY BAND ★ CULLEN AND MIA VANCE ★ LIVE PAINT: MOON TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD ★ PLANET SAMBA
JOE AND TONI TONE ★ LINDA YAPP AS THE LEMON DROP FAIRY ★ AMINTA SKYE ★ HUMMINGBIRDS GIRLS CHOIR ★ CAVEMAN DAVE
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entrance. In 1997 the Left Bank was extended to include more booths, stages and a large kid-friendly area called Chela Mela Meadow, named for the band of Kalapuya Indians who gathered annually on the property thousands of years ago. The Chela Mela Meadow features plenty of open space for yoga classes, hands-on art for kids and juggling lessons. The footprint grew again in 2015 with a new area later dubbed Xavanadu, which includes a dance pavilion and a big meadow with more room to play.

The Fair expanded entertainment over the years from four stages in the 1970s to 20 today. Instead of one stage showcasing vaudeville acts, now at least four stages book acts all day long — silk aerialists, clowns, mimes, a bubble artist, jugglers, puppeteers, acrobats, juggling acrobats and other amazing performers.

The twice-daily marching band parade started a trend. Now Peachi the Dragon makes her way through the throngs each day, and many mini-parades pop up along the pathways.

In 2001 the Spoken Word program launched, inviting dozens of speakers annually, such as Amy Goodman, Eugene Poetry Slam, Stephen Gaskin, Rob Brezny, Ram Das, Patch Adams and Pete Seeger.

Through the decades, Fair musicians have come from all over the sonic map. Early Fair favorites included local bands Wheatfield, Mithrandir, and the Crazy 8s. Regional musicians Jim Page, Baby Gramps, Laura Kemp, Artis the Spoonman, Alice DiMichele, Scott Cossu and Brian Cutean regularly perform. World beat bands gracing the stages ranged from Shumba, Caliente, and Zulu Spear in the 1980s to Los Mex Pistols del Norte, Samba Ja and Afrolicious in the 2000s.

For years, rumors swirled that the Grateful Dead would play at the Fair. That never happened, unless you count Grateful Dead playing in the Fair's parking lots for the "Field Trips" concerts in August 1972 and August 1982. Separately however, Grateful Dead drummer Bill Kreutzmann and lyricist Robert Hunter performed on Main Stage with other talented musicians in the 2000s.

In 2019, the Fair that was founded by young people finds itself at a new juncture. Two and three generations of families share booths and put on shows. The Elders group offers a place for people to step aside from their Fair jobs, making room for younger generations to step up. In September 2018, the Fair received a \$12,000 grant from the Oregon Cultural Trust to create an archive. This summer, exhibits at the Lane County History Museum and at the Central Library in Portland will celebrate Oregon Country Fair's 50-year history.

"It's hard to imagine it's still going now, because it came from a time that America seems to have forgotten in many ways," says Wren Arrington, events coordinator for White Bird. "My kids grew up here. I started coming before I had children, and now my son is 35. He's been on Fair crews, he's been a crew coordinator. Just last year he got his own food booth and I got a grandson. ... We joke about how someday they're going to be wheeling us around in chairs and parking us by the Main Stage while they go do the all the work. I think there's an element of truth to that. I think the Fair will keep on going and keep on evolving. It may not always look the way it does now. But it's not just an event, it's a community. That's the part that'll stay constant."

Looking Ahead

While honoring the past, Country Fair organizers keep their eyes to the future. The next generation is moving into leadership. Fair General Manager Crystalyn Autuchovich, now 35, grew up as a "Fair kid" in Community Village, where her father, Arthur Jones, has participated for decades. The Fair board is in the midst of hiring a new executive director to help manage the year-round organizational efforts.

But of immediate concern, the damage to the Fair's forests from February's snowstorm poses challenges to getting everything in shape by July. Numerous mature trees in the Fair's forestlands toppled over, severely damaging booths around the site. Even so, volunteers are planning a stupendous celebration for the Fair's 50th, with everyone pitching in once again to create "the best Fair ever." ♦

August 1996 — Further Festival held in the Fair's parking lot.

September 10, 1996 — Respect Our Community Committee established by the Fair's neighbors in Veneta and Elmira, elected officials and Fair leaders.

July 11-13, 1997 — Chela Mela Meadow opened with yoga garden, children's art area, a yurt for Tom Noddy's bubble magic, and more open space. Long Tom Watershed Council established with Further Festival funds. Fair and the city of Veneta awarded a Wetlands Consolidation Grant.

1998 — The Fair purchased a house in Eugene for a year-round office and volunteer meeting space.

2001 — Fair awarded Indian Creek Enhancement Grant.

August 11-12, 2001 — Culture Jam, a weekly youth empowerment program, held for the first time in August on the uplands of Fair property.

May 2007 — Fair board approves the Peach Power Fund to accept donations for capital projects involving energy and water conservation and renewable technologies.

July 10-12, 2015 — New Area (later dubbed Xavanadu) opened, creating much more open space for play.

July 12-14, 2019 — 50th Anniversary Celebration at the Oregon Country Fair.



AMY GOODMAN
AT OCF 2006



HULA HOOPING IN XAVANADU



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Future Fair

AT 50, THE FAIR IS LOOKING TO GROW UP — BUT WANTS TO DO IT RIGHT

BY **BOB KEEFER**

Imagine the Oregon Country Fair's 100th anniversary in 2069.

Fairgoers will arrive at the grounds near Veneta by solar-powered drones that depart every 20 minutes from bike-accessible parking lots around Eugene.

Musicians will perform on virtual stages, with no props, no lights and no instruments. The only ticket required for concerts is a virtual reality headset that gives you the full experience.

Wait — where are we going with this?

OCF turns 50 years old this summer, its golden anniversary. What, we wondered, will the Fair look like in another 50 years? Or in 25? Or even in five or 10?

We posed that question to Cynthia Wooten, one of the driving forces behind the original Fair 50 years ago. Her later career would include stints on the Eugene City Council and in the Oregon Legislature, and she answered the question in grown-up terms.

Wooten says the Fair needs to strike a smart balance between creating a mature leadership structure while maintaining the childlike wonder of the Fair experience.

"It's an interesting question right now. The Fair and organizations in general I think have times in the life of the organization where change is inevitable," she says. "Change is inevitable all along. But sometimes you come to a critical point in the life of an organization where major change occurs."

Is the Fair at a critical juncture?

"It's grown enormously," she says. "And there is a need for a new kind of professionalism with the size that it is."

For decades the Fair has worked on a consensus model, Wooten says, but may have outgrown its ability to function that way.

"So this is a move, I think, to a more a top-down governance style," she says. "I would like it to be a Fair that has a balanced governance style, you know, where volunteers are respected and heard and have a strong collaboration with the management and board."

At the same time, the Fair doesn't want to turn its back on its roots. It can't necessarily adopt a corporate structure and be successful.

"It's different with our organization," says

the youth are saying, 'Yeah, we've got to keep the elders to learn the lessons they have to teach.' I really think that we're a unique organization in that fact, and that we do have opportunities for people of all ages."

All of this administrative visioning, though, begs the question of what the Fair might look like to its participants in another generation.

One vision of the future would have OCF become a kind of world's Fair for environmentalism, modeling the latest and greatest in sustainable technologies and practices. Indeed, the Fair is already pursuing that vision and has been for years.

"We have actually a whole area called the Energy Park that's devoted to doing just that," Talbott says. "They rotate in various businesses and nonprofits to highlight technology around solar and wind [power]. There's oftentimes a display of an electric cars on the property. We've got solar charging stations all over. Last year there was a model home, essentially a tiny house, you know, and there was a lot of information within that, around composting toilets and various different ways of sustainability. We do try to highlight that kind of stuff to the best of our ability."

Just as the Fair is making a difficult decision to transition from informal consensus to corpo-



Stephanie Talbott, the Fair's assistant manager. "It is so family-oriented. You know, grandparents are now seeing their great-grandbabies crawling around on the land."

That brings up the question of age. The Fair was founded by then-young Baby Boomers, who are beginning to reach the age of not just retirement, but mortality.

"You see people of our generation moving off the landscape," Wooten says. "And I think that's right. It is time for a younger people to be taking the place of those who, you know, did it before. And we certainly had that feeling about the generation before us. It's a rhythm, and I think we can expect it. I'd like to see younger people take more responsibility with the Fair, but with adequate training."

The Fair has a Council of Elders that can be joined by anyone who has worked at the Fair for at least 20 years and is 55 or older. The council is not a governing board or committee, but exists "to assist the Oregon Country Fair family by offering a perspective that only substantial years of experience with life and the OCF can provide," the Elders' website says.

"Within a family I think we are less likely to just dismiss older people not being relevant," Talbott says. "I mean, we call each other our 'Fair family.' The elders are just as likely to reach out and say, 'What are we doing to engage our youth?' And

rate organization in its leadership, it needs to find the right balance between the glitter of new technology and its hippie roots.

One place that becomes clear is the question of communications. Cell service is spotty, at best, at the Fair's ground in Veneta. While most Fairgoers don't walk around with their faces buried in glowing cellphone screens, craftspeople selling their wares at the Fair would like to be able to accept credit cards — which means better communications.

Similarly, Fair security needs quick and reliable communications internally and with outside agencies, in case of emergency.

"There needs to be cell towers out there," Wooten says. "There needs to be a whole ton of things technically. How is artificial intelligence going to have an impact on the Fair? Is the Fair going to stay basically like it was in 1970s? Or will it culturally evolve and be somewhat different? Most people don't want it to."

For Crystalyn Autuchovich, the Fair's operations manager, keeping technology at a polite distance is the way to go, even if that means credit cards don't work.

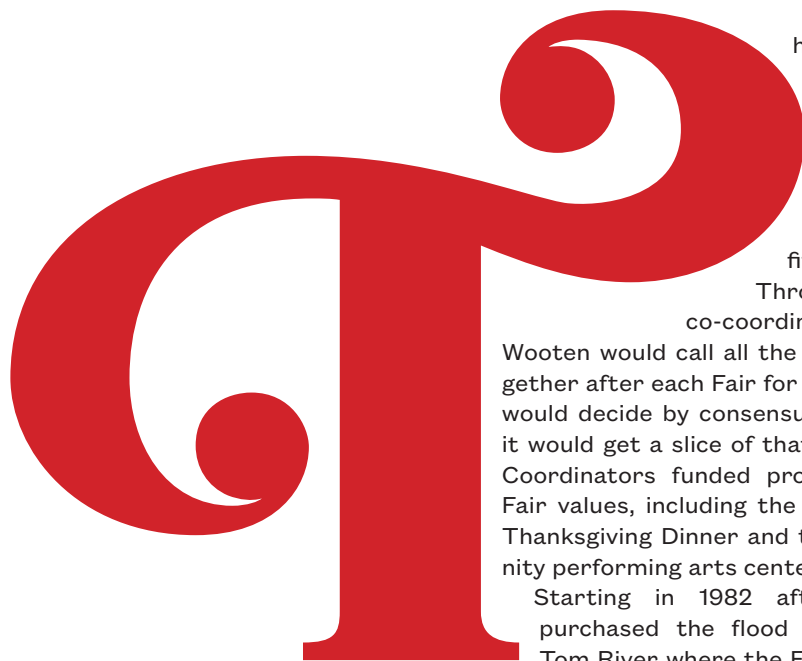
"We don't want people to be staring at their phones," she says. "We kind of discourage that to a certain extent. You know, we just, we simply don't have wifi there accessible to our public. On our website we encourage people to bring cash!" ♦



Party with a Purpose

PHILANTHROPY AT THE OREGON COUNTRY FAIR

BY SUZI PROZANSKI FOR EUGENE WEEKLY



he Oregon Country Fair has incubated a sense of community ever since the first Fair in 1969 raised funds for a children's school.

Those early efforts fit the simpler times.

Throughout the 1970s, Fair co-coordinators Bill and Cynthia Wooten would call all the crew coordinators together after each Fair for a meeting. There, they would decide by consensus which area nonprofit would get a slice of that year's Fair proceeds. Coordinators funded programs that reflected Fair values, including the Whiteaker community Thanksgiving Dinner and the WOW Hall community performing arts center.

Starting in 1982 after the organization purchased the flood zone along the Long Tom River where the Fair had been held each summer, organizers prioritized paying off the mortgage for the property. Formal donations dwindled for a decade, although the board approved a couple of loans to the WOW Hall during the 1980s that were subsequently repaid.

The Fair's philanthropic mission gained new focus in the 1990s after the original mortgage got paid off. In August 1990, a mortgage-burning ceremony was held at the Main Stage meadow during the annual volunteer appreciation Teddy Bears' Picnic.

The Fair had always supported a unique three-day arts and cultural festival, but the organization has blossomed over the last few decades into a successful nonprofit that now donates thousands of dollars annually to community nonprofits. As of 2019, the Fair has donated well over a million dollars.

Throughout the year, the Oregon Country Fair board donates money from a dedicated fund. The

board grants support a wide range of organizations whose missions resonate with Fair volunteers and Fairgoers such as the Earth Day planning, Eugene Peace Choir, Community Alliance of Lane County peace scholarships, the WOW Hall, Whiteaker Community Dinners and *Skipping Stones* magazine.

The Fair has two annual grant programs as well. In 1992, the board established the Oregon Country Fair Endowment Fund. It was renamed the OCF Bill Wooten Endowment Fund to honor Fair co-founder and visionary Bill Wooten after he died in January 1995.

Each year, the board puts a percentage of the Fair's proceeds into the endowment, which supports art education as well as after-school and summer programs for youths in west Lane County. When Oregon's Measure 5 caused budget cuts and local schools trimmed extracurricular activities, the Fair's endowment program helped bridge the gap for Fern Ridge School District arts programs. Fern Ridge schools have received grants for arts programs — which often combine the arts with exploration of cultural diversity or environmental themes — nearly every year since.

Other endowment grant projects include the art tile mural found at the Fern Ridge Library, student-generated art projects at the Skatepark in Veneta, and ropes courses at Camp Wilani, to name a few. Since it began, the Fair's endowment fund has donated more than half a million dollars to promote arts education in the Fern Ridge community.

In 1996, the board authorized a volunteer-driven effort to create the Jill Heiman Vision Fund, which honors the attorney who helped the Country Fair find its legal footing. Jill helped the Fair obtain its status as a recognized nonprofit, she protected the Fair with a successful lawsuit against Lane County and she facilitated the Fair's land purchase.

After Heiman died in 1991, her friends persuaded the board to create the fund to honor Heiman's legacy

of giving to the community. After graduating from the University of Oregon Law School, Heiman and Gretchen Miller, another UO grad, had opened the first women-owned law firm in Eugene. Heiman & Miller specialized in advising worker-owned cooperatives, and Heiman was also widely known as an affordable and effective attorney for nonprofit groups.

Fittingly, grantees of the Jill Heiman Vision Fund have included FOOD for Lane County, White Bird Clinic, the Northwest Coalition for Alternative to Pesticides, the Relief Nursery, WomenSpace, Egan Warming Center, Mid-Lane Cares, Florence Food Share, Lane Senior Support Center, and dozens of other nonprofits.

Every year volunteers set up boxes at Fair information booths to accept donations to the Jill Heiman Vision Fund. The Fair board meets the challenge by matching individual donations with Fair proceeds. Many food booths donate tips or profits each year. Over the years, the board has raised its matching grants. Now the board gives \$2 for every \$1 donated to the fund, with an annual cap of \$25,000. As of 2018, the Jill Heiman Vision Fund has donated more than \$550,000 to nonprofits in Lane County. For the Fair's 50th anniversary, volunteers for the fund have set a goal of raising \$50,000.

In 2001, the Fair sponsored the first Culture Jam, a weeklong camp for teens held on a parcel of the Fair's property known as Alice's Wonderland. The youth empowerment camp features arts-based workshops designed to help teens discover their creative potential and sense of purpose. Youths are offered opportunities to interact and learn from artists, nature educators and activists on topics as diverse as circus arts, writing, singing, spoken word, painting, drumming and nature appreciation.

Almost 300 youths have participated in Culture Jam, calling it "enlightening... life-changing." There's a waiting list every year. ♦

*As of 2018, the
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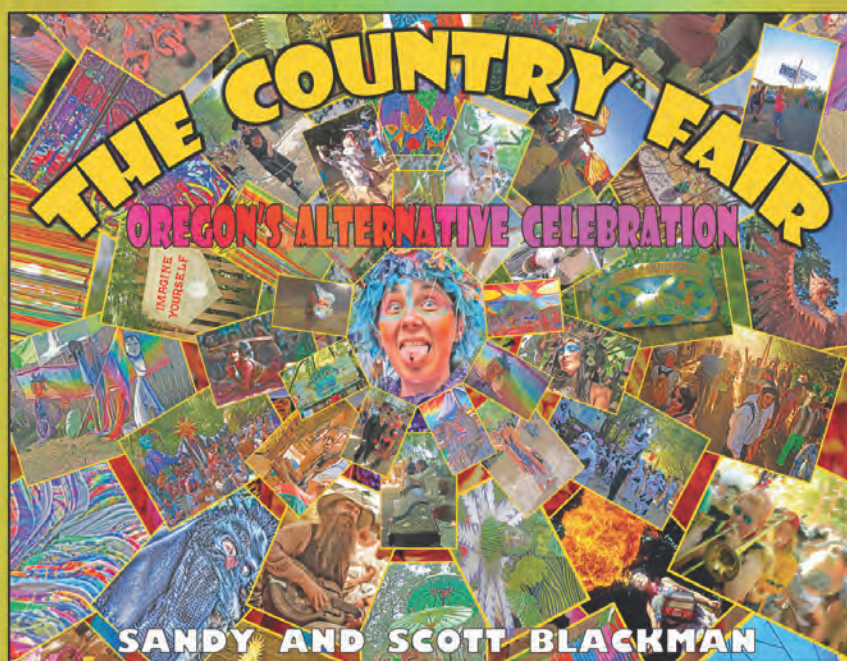
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Zak Schwartz

A half century of training BUMS in security

He heard of Eugene in 1973 through the informational app of the time (person-to-person conversation) and decided on a hitchhiking adventure from Santa Cruz, California, to find out more.

Forty-six years later, the 67-year-old Zak Schwartz is still a practicing psychologist with an office in Eugene, and he is still preaching the art of building and integrating intervention skills to the BUMs at Oregon Country Fair, and to all who will listen.

He is not slowing down and retiring anytime soon, either.

"I'm in the work-till-I-die program," he says cheerfully.

Schwartz is lively when discussing all things OCF, but more so when the topic is merging security measures at the Fair with healthy relationship language. It is an ongoing process that includes training the Back Up Managers (BUMs) and working with the Lane County Sheriff's department, and it has had increasing success in defusing potential flash points during the Fair's annual three-day run.

"Insight is easy," Schwartz likes to say. "Integrating is hard."

Yet Schwartz hears his work paying off each year with the OCF staff speaking the language he has drilled into them. From one of three books Schwartz has authored on the subject (*Changing Anger: A Respectful and Caring Approach to Reshaping Behavior*), this includes four types of communication: information sharing and validation seeking; problem solving and help/advice seeking; negotiation; and boundary setting.

Schwartz also is the author of *An Archangel Training Manual* and *Effective Humanistic Intervention*. He touts all of this and more every Thursday on the radio with his program "The Art of Relating" (KEPW, 97.3 FM).

He speaks fondly of the early years of the Fair, when OCF did not own land, when there was no amplification or electricity. "I enjoy my memory of that time," says Schwartz, but he is not consumed by it. Always, there is the present and the layers of concern regarding security. Also, he's having fun.

No, Schwartz is not slowing down. — Dan Buckwalter



Terry Baxter

Letting the Fair speak for itself

Terry Baxter was a jock when he was younger. He wasn't interested in a hippie happening like the Oregon Country Fair. But when he got older, having lived in Oregon most of his life, he decided he needed to see what the Fair was about.

He found at OCF a language that appealed to him. The Fair's vision for sustainability, Baxter says, was put into practice long before it was embraced by mainstream culture. He appreciated the limited hierarchy for decision making as well, and its underlying philosophy of peace.

Baxter is an archivist for Multnomah County. Even before he was contacted by long-time Fair videographer Jerry Joffe, he wondered if anyone was doing work to archive the Fair. Baxter has been working with Joffe for four years now, archiving visual materials and special collections. The visual materials change as technology has: motion picture film starting from the first year in 1969, VHS tape in the '80s, and finally the change to digital.

Joffe helps Baxter put the archival material into context. He has been with the Fair longer, having worked as a security crew and a videographer of the Fair in the early '80s. Context is important, Baxter says. It provides opportunities for all those involved to tell their own stories. Without the archives you might document the Fair using just one authoritative narrative. But collecting archival material from a multitude of people's experiences allows the Fair, Baxter says, "to speak for itself."

The Oregon Country Fair will speak for itself through archival material this summer on display at Lane County History Museum in Eugene and at the Collins Gallery at the Multnomah County Library in Portland. — Ester Barkai





Galen Carpenter

A local mayor helped OCF find camping space for hundreds

After Galen Carpenter became the first female mayor of Veneta in the 1990s, she created a campground for the Oregon Country Fair.

A former full-time teacher, Carpenter spent time on the Veneta City Council before she ran for mayor and won. She then teamed up with former Fair manager Leslie Scott to form a collaboration between the Fair and the community.

One year during OCF, Carpenter remembers, traffic was backed up for miles and many people didn't have a place to camp. She thought of Zumwalt

Campground, which was owned by the Army Corps of Engineers and was leased by the county. The city supported her request, and a campground for Fairgoers was created.

At the campground, attendees were provided with basic services and transportation to and from the Fair. During the campground's first year, Carpenter and other volunteers thought they could host 800 campers, but maxed out at 1,200.

"It started a progressive collaboration between the city and the Fair," Carpenter says.

Additionally, the proceeds from the campers went back to the city — specifically, the parks and recreation department. The campground has been largely successful ever since.

"I camped out there probably 10 years," Carpenter says. "You have the lake, the sunset, and you can see the Three Sisters."

After volunteering for the city of Veneta for nine years, Carpenter moved to New Mexico and taught on the Navajo reservation. She has since retired in Colorado. Carpenter's son continues to volunteer every year, and Carpenter herself hopes to attend this summer. — *Taylor Perse*

Darcy DuRuz

Keeping women and girls up in the air

Girl Circus is a Eugene-based organization featuring professional and amateur female performers with the goal of improving gender equality in circus and theater arts.

Formed in 2001, the group teaches classes and summer camps all over the Northwest for women and girls of all ages.

OCF inspired Girl Circus, co-founder Darcy DuRuz says, calling the idea a "wild hair."

"There just weren't enough women and girls being featured at the Fair," she says. The Fair supported the idea, providing an entire stage to DuRuz.

"The vaudeville community there was super encouraging about doing a totally female theater troupe," DuRuz says. "That was 100 percent instrumental in making it happen."

To see an all-female production of any sort — from the performers to the director to the lighting designer — is pretty rare, DuRuz says.

Before Girl Circus, "the need was really great," she says.

Girl Circus produces shows with amateur and professional female performers and original music. "We trained the younger girls," DuRuz says.

Girl Circus also hosts summer camps around Oregon and in Washington state. "We do these highly active, strength building, empowering, creative summer camps. It's about creativity, mentorship, and female empowerment," she says.

Girl Circus is undergoing an outreach program to bring their services to rural parts of Oregon "so we have an even broader accessibility to girls," DuRuz says.

On the occasion of OCF's 50th anniversary, DuRuz is just grateful for the support she received in getting her venture off the ground.

"I'm really grateful for the Fair and their continuing support of our mission of creativity and mentorship for girls and women," she says. — *Will Kennedy*





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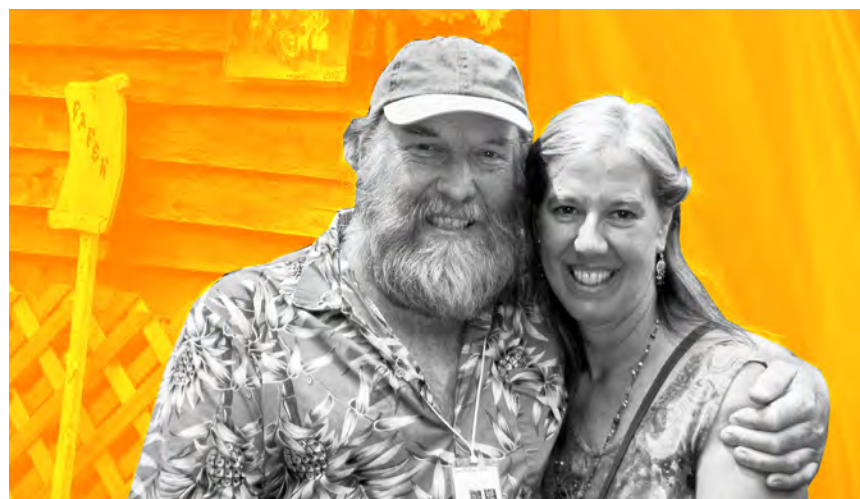
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Paul and Judy Fuller

Finding the right balance for Fair food

Divine Balance Fruit Salad began at the 1978 Oregon Country Fair as an enterprise of Om Farm, a commune near the Fern Ridge Reservoir. Paul Fuller helped run the booth that first year and settled into an old canning shed at Om Farm. Judy Herbert, who grew up in Noti, joined Om Farm in 1980 after she and Paul fell in love. The group grew an organic garden and canned its bounty with a 44-quart pressure canner Paul had purchased with an inheritance.

Paul and Judy married in 1983 and moved to their own place in 1985 before their son Zach was born. Paul took a Lane Community College class in refrigeration work and used recycled equipment to build a cooler for Thistlebrook Farm. Soon he was building coolers for Organically Grown Cooperative and natural food stores all around town.

In 1995, Paul switched to farming with Judy. At their new property, they created Sweet Creek Foods, selling their pickles and sauces in glass jars at the Farmers Market in Eugene. In 2006, Sweet Creek Foods began delivering to local grocery stores. Sweet Creek Foods also jars produce for other farmers and small food businesses, giving an added-value boost to the local economy.

In 2005, Paul and a small crew built "Chillville" to store cold food for booths at the Oregon Country Fair. This year, Paul and Judy will once again join friends to run the Divine Balance Fruit Salad booth, four decades after it began. — Suzi Prozanski

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Dana and Colleen Bauman

The Fair's first 24-hour booth

Dana's Cheesecake debuted at the Eugene Saturday Market in December 1979, selling slices of delectable cheesecake along with cookies, cakes, and coffee.

In 1982, Dana and Colleen Bauman opened Dana's Cheesecake booth on Shady Lane for the three days of the Oregon Country Fair. To their surprise, after the Fair closed to the public each evening, the line for sweets and coffee never let up. That first year, the Baumans took turns sleeping so they could meet the all-night demand, inadvertently creating the first 24-hour booth at the Fair. In 1983, the Baumans hired help for the overnight shift so they could go home to rest.

In 1992, the Baumans agreed to move their popular booth from its crowded site on Shady Lane to a more spacious area near the new Fair entrance. "The idea of eating dessert first, I think, fits with the whole thing," Colleen said.

Saturday Market, though, guides the rhythm of their lives. During the week, they bake cakes and treats in their home kitchen. Saturday brings marathon workdays. Dana arrives before dawn to set up so they can serve coffee to other vendors getting ready for the day. Colleen pitches in. Business remains brisk every Saturday, 40 years later. — Suzi Prozanski



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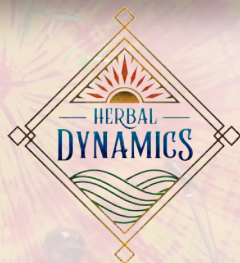
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